

SEN. J. FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 6
DATE Jan. 20, 2009
BILL NO. SB 202

January 20, 2009

SB 202: Prohibiting the feeding of certain wildlife

First of all, I have a few questions regarding this bill.

If this bill is passed, will large winter feeding stations for elk, bison, and other species be banned? They result in an artificial concentration of game, which could result in a higher concentration of predatory and carrion species.

Why are individuals occupied in the cultivation of a lawn or garden exempt from liability? If they plant tulips or other ornamental plants that are known deer delicacies and they do not fence out the deer, they are providing a "supplemental feed attractant".

What is the estimated cost of enforcement if this bill becomes law?

Does grain, bird seed, and suet from feeding wild birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and rabbits constitute a "supplemental feed attractant"? The chickadees, nuthatches, and other wild songbirds that visit my feeders spill and drop quite a few sunflower seeds that the deer, who also visit my yard, will eat.

I put grain, pellets, and the occasional vegetable scrap out for the wild rabbits that have chosen to live under the woodpile. Does this constitute a "supplemental feed attractant"?

Does a salt block for the deer and antelope constitute a "supplemental feed attractant"? In late spring and early summer, the antelope (particularly pregnant and nursing does) seem to be deficient in salt, as they can spend quite a while licking the salt block.

Does having pet food out for outside cats and dogs constitute a "supplemental feed attractant"?

Does having a water bowl for the birds, small mammals, and outside pets constitute a "supplemental feed attractant"? The deer drink as well as the birds, small mammals, and pets.

I realize that some areas, particularly urban areas, are experiencing some problems with aggressive and overabundant wildlife. But, this is not the case throughout the State and should be addressed on a local level, not by a "one size fits all" type of legislation that encompasses the entire State.

People should not provide feed to attract wildlife for the purpose of hunting or provide feed in such amounts as to cause an artificial concentration of animals.

I enjoy having a variety of birds, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, deer, antelope, and elk visit my 40 acres. Other than some antler rubbing on young Ponderosa pines, nibbling on some shrubs, and the early morning wakeup call of a flicker drumming on the chimney cap, there have been no problems with these species in twelve plus years. They have never exhibited any aggressive behavior toward me. We have established a peaceful, respectful, and trusting co-existence.

Antelope feel safe enough to have their fawns on the hillside south of my house and deer are comfortable bringing their fawns to the yard. A couple of years ago I filmed, from my front deck, the birth of twin antelope fawns and witnessed some amazing cooperation from other does during the birth process.

The deer and antelope populations have remained about the same on the property through the years...there has been no artificial concentration of animals. They do not stay in the yard or on the property, but rather browse through and go on about their business.

The ability to see the birds and animals that close is a very special opportunity for many of us who live in Montana. I do not go out searching the woods for the wildlife, but allow them to visit on their schedule and on their terms. I do not wish to violate the law, but it would be a shame to be denied these types of experiences.

I feel this bill attempts to solve a problem that does not exist in many areas. For these reasons, I oppose this bill and hope that you will vote against it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Cindy Swank
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